

LAW DEPARTMENT

Law Department exists to provide high quality legal services and guidance to the City Council, City Manager, and the departments, boards, agencies, utilities and commissions of the City.



Overview

The Law Department has three main functions: provide legal counsel for City Council and City staff, provide legal representation for the City, and prosecute cases in Municipal Court. The activities are accomplished by a staff of seventeen attorneys and eight support staff who are divided into prosecutorial and civil legal sections. The Department is financed solely from the General Fund with the exception of a Senior Attorney's salary, whose primary responsibility is to assist with bond related projects, which is transferred to the Financial Projects Fund.

Finance and Operations

Selected Service Level Measures	Selected Service Level Measures			
	1999	2000	2001	2002
Legal opinions rendered	542	419	497	497
Revenue bond issues closed	19	11	19	19
Ordinances reviewed	3,715	3,316	3,443	3,443
Contracts reviewed	1,254	1,026	1,200	1,200
Hours / ordinance reviewed	1.28	1.29	1.28	1.28
Hours / contract reviewed	0.53	0.78	0.61	0.61

Civil legal staff perform a variety of roles: providing legal advice; drafting and reviewing contracts; rendering legal opinions; and conducting litigation for the City.

A significant role of the Law Department is to represent the City in civil legal actions, including labor, utility franchise, and environmental disputes and negotiations. Law staff also provide legal advice to the City Council, City departments, and boards. A staff of eight attorneys focus on handling diverse requests including:

- Drafting and reviewing proposed contracts
- Resolutions and ordinances
- Defending the City in tort claim matters
- Rendering legal opinions
- Assisting with the City's legislative program

All claims filed against the City are reviewed and processed by Law Department. The review ascertains the relative merits of the claims, and staff attempt to settle claims when appropriate. Claim costs are funded from the Self Insurance Fund, a component of the Finance Department.

A diversion coordinator, housed in the prosecution section, administers the City's diversion and deferred judgment programs. The programs are available for eligible first time offenders and offenses that include speeding, petit larceny, certain drug offenses, DUI, and domestic violence. In every diversion case, program fees and fines are assessed to finance all program costs.

Selected Service Level Measures - Diversion	Selected Service Level Measures - Diversion			
	1999	2000	2001	2002
DUI diversions accepted	740	727	750	750
Petit theft diversions accepted	386	328	350	350
Speeding diversions accepted	674	323	350	350
Drug diversions accepted	354	379	400	400
DV diversions accepted	496	471	500	500

Another core function is prosecuting offenders in Municipal Court while maintaining walk-in hours to assist citizens. A staff of seven attorneys and a prosecution supervisor provide the service and supported by two clerical positions.



Based on the current docket structure, prosecutors represent the City on 33 Municipal Court dockets and maintain office hours to assist citizens on a walk-in basis. In addition, prosecutors engage in case review prior to the beginning of the dockets. Staff also represent the City in Municipal Court appeals.

The Law Department also has oversight of the Victim Rights Center. The center provides notice, as required by Kansas Law, to crime victims of certain court proceedings, which include but are not limited to plea hearings, continuances, trials, sentencing, sentence modifications, probation violation hearings and appeals.



Prosecution examining a witness during mock trial.

Selected Service Level Measures				
	1999	2000	2001	2002
Municipal Court cases set for trial	29,812	34,640	36,065	36,065
Hours per Municipal Court appeal	4.32	3.28	3.65	3.65
Number of Municipal Court appeals	231	324	275	275

An upcoming technological improvement for the Law Department will occur with the replacement of the antiquated Public Safety System, utilized in conjunction with Police and Municipal Court. The new computer system will encompass utilization of bar code and drivers' license scanning, imaging and Internet technology. The Integrated Public Safety System will offer a centralized information system for Police, Prosecution, and Court. An imaging component of the public safety system will allow multiple users to simultaneously access single case files; significantly reduce storage and filing problems; and facilitate case review and preparation functions. Imaging will provide desktop viewing of case documents once the documents have been entered into the system, eliminating the task of filing and re-filing case files.

The 2001 budget includes funds to implement a drug court software program. The software will consolidate defendants' information, providing a drug court team one centralized access point for defendant data.

Law Department Budget Summary					
	2000 Actual	2001 Adopted	2001 Revised	2002 Adopted	2003 Approved
Personal Services	1,397,372	1,458,750	1,515,590	1,534,750	1,554,610
Contractual Services	173,686	234,260	214,550	237,350	237,350
Commodities	7,963	9,020	8,510	8,510	8,510
Capital Outlay	0	0	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0	0	0
Total Local Expenditures	1,579,021	1,702,030	1,738,650	1,780,610	1,800,470
General Fund	1,579,021	1,702,030	1,738,650	1,780,610	1,800,470
Grant Resources	0	66,100	0	0	0
Total full-time positions	25	25	25	25	25
Total part-time positions	2	1	2	1	1
Total FTE positions	25.5	25.25	25.5	25.25	25.25